

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BANGKO 07505 130932Z
ACTION HA-05

INFO OCT-01 EA-10 IO-13 ISO-00 /029 W
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FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
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USMISSION GENEVA
AMCONSUL HONG KONG

C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 7505

FOL TEL SENT ACTION IMMEDIATE BANGKOK INFO PRIORITY VIENTIANE
FROM UDORN DATED MARCH 12, 1978 REPEATED TO YOU

QUOTE

C O N F I D E N T I A L UDORN 0058

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: SREF TH LA
SUBJECT: INCREASED HMONG INFLUX INTO NONG KHAI PROVINCE

REF: A) UDORN 0057 B) UDORN 0054

1. ON INSTRUCTIONS FROM EMBASSY BANGKOK, VICE CONSUL RUEBENSAAL, IN ABSENCE OF CONSUL FINNEY WHO WAS VISITING REFUGEE CAMP IN UBON, CALLED ON NONG KHAI VICE GOVERNOR SOMBOON THAIWATCHARAWAT AT HIS HOME AFTERNOON MARCH 11 TO EXPRESS OUR DEEP CONCERN OVER THAI EFFORTS TO REPEL HMONG REFUGEES CURRENTLY ATTEMPTING TO CROSS MEKONG RIVER FROM LAOS INTO PROVINCE. (GOVERNOR CHAMNAN WAS NOT AVAILABLE.)

2. VICE CONSUL CITED PHON PHISAI DISTRICT POLICE OPERATION NEAR NONG KHENG VILLAGE, EVENING OF MARCH 9,
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(REFTEL A, PARA 8) AS AN EXAMPLE OF ACTIONS TO DENY ASYLUM TO REFUGEES. HE SUGGESTED TO VICE GOVERNOR SOMBOON POSSIBLE TRAGIC RESULTS THAT COULD FOLLOW FROM SUCH ACTIONS SHOULD HMONG REFUGEES TRY MASS CROSSING OF MEKONG IN NEAR FUTURE.

3. VICE GOVERNOR SOMBOON LISITENED POLITELY TO

VICE CONSUL'S EXPRESSION OF CONCERN. HE THEN REPLIED FIRMLY THAT HE WAS AWARE OF EFFORTS BY PHON PHISAI DISTRICT POLICE TO TURN BACK HMONG REFUGEES; THAT SIMILAR METHODS ARE BEING EMPLOYED IN MANY OTHER DISTRICTS ALONG NORTHEAST'S MEKONG RIVER BORDER WITH LAOS; AND THAT SUCH OPERATIONS WOULD CONTINUE IN ACCORDANCE WITH INSTRUCTIONS FROM MOI CONTAINED IN DIRECTIVE TO ALL BORDER PROVINCE AUTHORITIES IMPLEMENTING RTG'S EXCLUSIONARY POLICY INAUGURATED NOVEMBER 15, 1977.

4. VICE GOVERNOR SOMBOON STATED FURTHER THAT HE UNDERSTANDS USG DOES NOT APPROVE OF RTG'S EXCLUSIONARY POLICY BECAUSE AMERICANS ARE A "SENSITIVE" PEOPLE WITH "GREAT CONCERN FOR HUMAN RIGHTS". HE ADDED, HOWEVER, THAT THIS POLICY IS NECESSARY BECAUSE:

A. REFUGEES POSE A THREAT TO THAILAND'S INTERNAL SECURITY, THAI OFFICIALS BEING UNABLE TO DISTINGUISH BETWEEN BONA FIDE REFUGEES AND COMMUNIST SYMPATHIZERS;

B. REFUGEES REPRESENT A SEVERE BURDEN ON THAI ECONOMY;

C. AFTER TWO YEARS, FLOW OF REFUGEES INTO THAILAND CONTINUES AND IT IS INCONCEIVABLE THAT ALL WILL BE ACCEPTED FOR RESETTLEMENT IN THIRD COUNTRIES;
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D. UNHCR WILL NOT SUPPORT REFUGEES IN THAILAND INDEFINITELY. EVENTUALLY, ENTIRE RESPONSIBILITY FOR SUPPORT WILL FALL ON RTG.

5. VICE GOVERNOR SOMBOON CONCLUDED BY STATING THAT WHILE HE APPRECIATES OUR CONCERN, HIS PROVINCE WILL CONTINUE TO TURN BACK REFUGEES, AS DIRECTED BY MOI, BY ANY MEANS POSSIBLE, SHORT OF PHYSICAL VIOLENCE.

6. FOLLOWING MEETING WITH VICE GOVERNOR, VICE CONSUL RUEBENSAAL LOCATED UNHCR NORTHEAST REP, WHO ALSO HAPPENED TO BE IN NONG KHAI PROVINCIAL CAPITAL, AND INFORMED HIM OF EFFORTS BY THAI AUTHORITIES TO TURN BACK HMONG REFUGEES SEEKING TO ENTER PROVINCE. UNHCR REP STATED IN RESPONSE THAT HE WILL CALL ON NONG KHAI GOVERNOR OR VICE GOVERNOR MARCH 13 OR 14 TO AGAIN REGISTER HIS PROTEST OVER ANY ACTION TO FORCIBLY TURN BACK HMONG REFUGEES WHO HAVE LANDED IN THAILAND. HE STATED THAT HE HAS INFORMAL AGREEMENT WITH GOVERNOR CHAMNAN TO BE INFORMED IN ADVANCE OF ANY SUCH ACTION. (REF B, PARA 2)

7. UNHCR REP ALSO STATED THAT HE HAD JUST RETURNED FROM VISIT TO PHON PHISAI DISTRICT WHERE POLICE OFFICER INFORMED HIM THAT AN ADDITIONAL 69 NEW HMONG REFUGEES HAD SUCCEEDED IN ENTERING DISTRICT MARCH 10 AND 11. NEW ARRIVALS ARE BEING DETAINED AT DISTRICT POLICE STATION. NUMBER OF HMONG REFUGEES ENTERING PHON PHISAI AND BUNG KAN DISTRICTS SINCE BEGINNING OF MONTH IS NOW APPROXIMATELY 350. TOTAL NUMBER OF HMONG WHO HAVE SOUGHT REFUGE IN NONG KHAI PROVINCE SINCE MID-DECEMBER 1977 IS AN ESTIMATED 900-1100. FINNEY

UNQUOTE
WHITEHOUSE

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NNN

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